



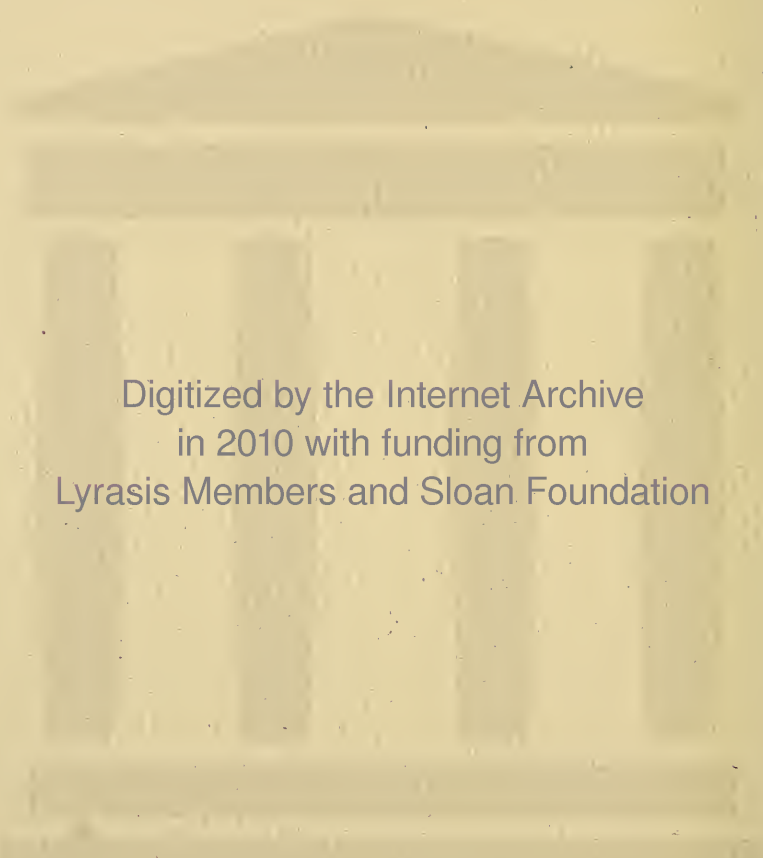
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*Quarters*


SPRING 1975

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# Four Quarters

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SPRING, 1975

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Cover: *Julius Bloch, charcoal drawing, Study for "Young Woman."*  
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# Marginalia . . .

## *The Case FOR College*

*A lady named Caroline Bird is flying around the country these days, appearing on talk shows and giving newspaper interviews promoting her book, The Case Against College. Apparently the David McKay Company, her publisher, is betting an expense account on the fact that there is a fairly large audience just looking for a reason not to spend thousands of dollars sending their children to college. Declining enrollments in many of the nation's private colleges, including the prestigious and high-tuition Ivy League institutions, suggest that Ms. Bird may be telling people just what they want to hear.*

*If so, a new myth may be replacing an older one: college as an expensive fraud instead of college as the door to success.*

*The older myth appeared to take root in the late 1940's and early '50's. Millions of ex-G.I.'s from working class backgrounds who might never have considered college economically feasible used their G.I. Bill to get degrees that opened up careers in business, law, education, or medicine. To many of their parents, the rise of their children into comfortable middle class status was proof of the American Dream and evidence that education was the catalyst that would make the dream a reality.*

*Of course the myth was terribly oversimplified: college was never a magic wand; there were such things as motivation, talent, ability to surmount adversity—things that the G.I.'s had learned in other schools than college—but it had enough truth in it to survive virtually unchallenged for about thirty years, or as long as times were good and jobs were available to college graduates. No matter how often swamped admissions officers reminded parents that "not everyone should go to college," parents saw any other alternative as bearing the stigma of failure.*

*In recent years, several things have changed the picture drastically. College costs more—much more. And aid programs have done little to help middle class parents. While inflation squeezes at one end, recession strangles opportunity at the other: it is no longer possible for every graduate to walk into a job or be admitted into a professional school for which he is qualified.*

*The pendulum has swung, and the value of college education is being seriously questioned by critics like Ms. Bird. The argument is that sending a student to college is a bad investment. It*  
*(Continued on Page 47)*



# Early Retirement

MARY A. CULLITON

**Y**OU SEE A little woman standing before a rectangular mirror. The mirror is attached to the tall heavy mahogany dresser that is of the same early 1900 vintage as she is. Her name is Rose O'Connor and she's a spinster.

She's dabbing pale pink powder on her yellowish, purplish, reddish face. Her face is yellowish because she is drying up with age and it's purplish and reddish because she drinks quite a bit, too much, some say.

Right now she is getting herself prepared for her retirement party. She has worked at the Catholic school office since she was 25. She has had this job as a clerk there because one of her brothers is the diocesan chancellor, the Bishop's right-hand man.

She is not thinking about the party. What she is thinking about she is going to tell her landlady, Jessie Baker, who has just lumbered into her room. Jessie and she are friends because they are about the same age and Jessie, a divorcee, lives alone too, and both like to have a long frank talk and a shot of bourbon together now and then.

"I've just got to tell my brother tonight about the house I want to rent," Rose says to Jessie. And Jessie puts her round chunky body into a big overstuffed chair that is scarred with cigarette burns, "Oh, Jessie, I would love to rent that little place. It's not big and there's hardly any lawn to mow and it's all on one floor. God, I could use a drink! But I've got to stay cold sober so I can make a good impression on my brother and talk to him with a clear head."

"Hell, Rose, you're old enough to live your own life. You're past 60, aren't you? Go rent the house and tell your brother to jump in the lake."

"You don't know my brother. You don't tell him to jump

anyplace. I know he wants me to go to St. Anselm's home. Can you imagine me in an old people's home, run by nuns, no less? I know it would be a good place if I got sick. But I'm not sick yet. And I could live in this little house until I get sick. The rent is cheap, cheaper than that home, I'll tell you. But my brother wants me safely tucked away. Oh, Jessie, zip me up, would you, dear? My hands are shaking. How do you like my dress?"

The dress is a blue and green long-sleeved print that is molded snugly to Rose's small bony body. Her shoes are medium-heeled brown pumps and she wears small dangling pearl earrings. Her hair still has a touch of brown, auburn actually, clinging on despite the gray's invasion. It looks recently cut and beauty-parlor set with a few simple waves that are stiff with spray. She gives the impression of the 1930s or late '20s, although her clothes are new, bought especially for this party.

Now you hear a faint knock on the door. It makes Rose run a tiny veiny hand through the carefully set waves of her hair.

"That must be my escorts," she tells Jessie.

"I better get out of here," Jessie says and pulls her flabby body, wrapped in a brunch coat, up from the chair. "Say, is it a fellow pickin' you up?"

"No, no darling. A couple. My brother assigned them to take me to the party and I suppose keep an eye on me tonight. See that I don't disgrace the honor of the O'Connors by having too good a time at the big party. This young man works in the school office with me. He's a good kid but a little stuffy. I think his wife makes him that way. She's cute, though."

Rose opens the door and standing before it is this couple. The wife is what is called petite, not little, because she is chicly unclutteredly dressed and because she has a gracefulness and liveliness from her large blue eyes to her size five shoes. The man is a couple of inches too short to be considered ideal but he gives Rose a warm boyish smile, a smile that is most appealing to women, especially the very young and very old.

"You look lovely, Rose," the girl says.

"Thank you, Doris, but I've never looked lovely in my life." There is a touch of annoyance in Rose's voice.

"Rosie always looks beautiful," the man says.

"Oh, Bob, you are the one," Rose says and feigns a coquettish giggle.

Bob helps Rose with her coat, a short tan box coat. And Rose introduces Jessie to the couple. Then all four leave the sparsely, neatly furnished room whose predominant color is brown.

The couple and Rose walk in silence through the hallway where a low-watt light in a plain white globe burns and they continue out into the autumn night.

Now they hear the sound of their feet crunching dried leaves and the clunking and whirring and honking of traffic.

"You've got a nice new car," Rose says as she climbs stiffly into the shiny station wagon.

"No. Bob just washed this old one," Doris says.

They ride through the city and pretend to listen to the news broadcast on the radio. But Rose is not listening.

This is her night for remembering.

**T**HE NUN'S FACE, a round pink face that should be merry but is always drawn up in sternness, appears from long ago to Rose. So long ago.

The wide chapped lips open and out comes, "Monsignor O'Connor is coming this afternoon to hear your catechism, children. And woe betide those who don't know the answers."

There is always a Monsignor O'Connor. Then, in that airless classroom that smells of boys' perspiring feet, it is an uncle.

"Rose O'Connor," the chapped lips emit. "You of all people should know your catechism."

"But, Stir, I had a bad cold yesterday and I couldn't study. You know my family gets lots of colds."

Her mother's cold a few years before turned out to be pneumonia.

Rose sees a scene flashing briefly through her memory. There is a small pale skinny woman lying in a coffin, her pretty face like the wax of the candles about her. Rose turns off that picture quickly.

And then she hears a pipsqueaky voice coming from a huge man, his small glistening eyes scowling above a stiff white priest's collar.

"Rose O'Connor, why did God make you?"

Rose stands, shifting from one foot to the other, her fingers clutching at her desk top for support.

"I—to—serve—to love—God made me to—to—" and she sits down, her face burns and she looks at the brown wooden desk top where she had written RO'C in ink.

"Why did God make you, Rose? Why, why?"

Now it is her own voice asking the question.

THE COUPLE, Doris and Bob, are chattering away about how "great this party is going to be. And it should be. Rosie, you deserve the best. Say, how many years have you been at the school office?"

Rose answers, "About 30, I guess."

Rose hears an echo, "30,30,30." And a little sarcastic voice inside her says, "It's longer than that, Rosie. You've been a file clerk longer than that. Hee, hee, hee."

Now Rose sees a living room with lace doillies on heavy dark chairs, pettipoint-covered footstools, figurines of Scotty dogs and ladies in hooped skirts, and pseudo-Chinese vases and lamp shades with tassels. Rose's younger sister chose the decor of their family home, the pretty sister who married at 19.

"What are you doing, Rosie?" Joe asks her.

Her brother Joe is about 21, just one year younger than Rosie. He is sitting in a leather rocking chair with the sports section of the evening paper open before his sunburned face. "What the duce are you doing making little marks all over that notebook paper?"

"Learning shorthand."

"Learning shorthand?" The voice is bellowing, filled with a choking-type laughter. "You? Lamebrain little Rosie! Hey, George, come here. Look who's trying to learn shorthand."

George saunters in. He is round and grinning and teenaged.

"No kidding? Let's see what kind of marks you make, Rosie. Look like hen scratchings to me."

"Where have you ever seen hen scratchings?" Rose asks and hides her notepaper behind her cupped hand.

"What's going on in here?"

A small skinny man joins them. He wears black pants and a conservative dark blue shirt because he is a seminarian home for summer vacation.

"Look who's trying to learn shorthand, Phil! Our numbskull sister."

"Not Rosie?" he says. And his little face wrinkles into a laugh. "Rosie, you'd better stick to selling dishes at the dime store."

"When Phil's a bishop he'll get you a good job. So you don't have to go to so much trouble, Rosie," George says and his voice cracks in middle of "trouble."

"Don't kid about such things, George," the seminarian chides and frowns. He has a magnificent frown that goes from his pale freckled forehead to his sawed-off chin.

"I do think you could spend your time in better ways, though,



Rose," he says, still frowning. "There are a lot of dirty clothes in the hamper I noticed. I'm about out of socks, as a matter of fact."

Joe goes back to the sports page. George goes outside, shutting the door very quietly, Phil picks up a big gray book and sits down in a green flowered arm chair. And Rose closes her notebook forever.

"And be careful what you say around Rosie O'Connor. She's Monsignor Philip O'Connor's sister, you know."

The half-whispering female voice comes to Rose from the other side of the high dark green cabinets in the school office. Rose is standing at an opened drawer, pretending to look through the manila folders.

"Did he get her the job here?" another voice, louder, younger, also female comes over the cabinet.

"I guess. But Rosie is a good clerk. She does her work better than anybody. And I don't think she carries tales back to her brother. But, you know, blood is thicker."

"She's an old maid, isn't she?"

"Yes. And I don't know why. I bet she was good-looking when she was younger."

"Probably neurotic about something. Sexually inhibited."

Sexually inhibited, like hell! Rosie comments on the memory. And she recalls someone named Harry and a Bernie and there was Albert. Albert and she went together for some time.

She sees herself sitting beside him drinking beer in a smokey orange-lighted speakeasy.

"Do we have to go to your girl friend's party tonight?" Albert asks and looks at Rose with his large puppy-dog eyes. "We never spend an evening by ourselves."

"I promised my friend we'd come. Besides I like a party. There's going to be a great bunch there."

And there was Johnny and Frank and Charlie. She thinks there was a Charlie. Oh, there was a crowd of them because she was lively and told good jokes and the fellows felt at home with her.

"I got a car, Rose."

It's Frank, tall gangling Frank, twisting his cap in his long nervous fingers, as he stands on the O'Connor's vine-sheltered front porch on a summer twilight.

"You want to come for a ride with me? You'll be the first person to ride with me."

She doesn't answer at once but laughs to cover her hesitation. And she remembers a voice, either Philip's or her grouchy

heavy-drinking father's, saying, "It makes me sick when I think of the things young fellows do when they get a girl alone in a car."

Rose stops laughing and answers Frank, "Okay. But let's go pick up some of the gang. If you wait a little bit, I'll make up a picnic for the bunch."

Another time, after Frank had a couple of beers, he gently pushed her from a sitting position on the couch to lying. Then he lay on top of her and started to caress her and for a few moments she liked feeling his hard vibrant body on her small thin one.

But shortly she remembered the things she had been taught in school and at home that said she shouldn't be enjoying this. Although she knew she was alone in the house, she said, "I'm going to call Philip down from upstairs if you don't get off me."

Frank jumped up and bolted out of the house. That was the last time she ever saw Frank.

"THIS IS YOUR night, Rosie," Bob says as the station wagon reaches the hall where her retirement party is being held. It is a light brick, one-story VFW hall that is rented out for parties and weddings and sports banquets.

"Here's Rosie!" Larry shouts and waves to her. He is a young man who works in the school office while he is getting his M.A. The young people always like her, Rose knows. Maybe she's less staid than most older people.

Now the evening moves swiftly. There are colors of women's second-best party dresses and the pink and yellow paper flower and streamer decorations on the long table where the buffet is set up neatly. There are the colors of reddish meats and green olives and pickles and brown rye bread and white and orange cheese and yellow mustard and white and pink cakes. And Rose holds a glass of amber bourbon and water and sips it with careful tiny canary-like sips because she sees the squinting pale eyes of her brother Monsignor Philip O'Connor resting on her too often.

There are voices.

"Now you can have a ball, Rosie. Sleep 'til noon everyday."

"Do I envy you, Rosie! You can do what you want now."

"Rosie, you surely don't look old enough to retire."

"It'll be a dull office without you, Rosie."

"How long have you been at the school office, anyway?"

"Twenty-five years, about. I forget exactly. I just forget."

Rose has just started on her second amber glass late in the

evening when Monsignor O'Connor gets around to speaking instead of only looking at her.

"It's nice of so many people to come to your party," he says. "I've seen even some of the people from our old neighborhood."

"Yes, it's nice. It's like a wake in a way."

"Tomorrow I'd like to see you for a short time. Perhaps you can come to my office. I'll have my secretary call you. I think we'd better start making plans about your moving out of that rooming house where you live now."

"All right." Rose's voice is shakey. "I've been wanting to tell you about a house—I think I mentioned it—a little house for rent, near St. Anthony's church, just a block from there. The house—I said it was small, didn't I—reasonable, very reasonable."

"This is not the place to discuss this matter, Rose. However, I would prefer your moving to St. Anselm's home. You'd be well taken care of there. I wouldn't have to worry about you."

"But I'm not sick. I'm not senile. I can take care of myself for a good many years."

"I doubt that, Rose. You've never taken very good care of yourself."

He glares at the drink in her hand and moves away. His small skinny frame is quickly lost in the crowd.

Rose finishes her drink in two gulps. And she goes to the table with the yellow and pink decorations and asks for a refill.

"That a girl, Rosie," Larry says. "This is your night to howl."

The lights grow dimmer, softer for Rose and the voices and the phonograph records and the clinking of dishes all blend and become a muffled buzzing. She seems to hear herself talking and fuzzy faces are looking at her, all of them grinning. They all look alike, encircling her, controlling her, stifling her. She must make them smile, she must make them like her, she must make them approve of her.

Someone, she thinks it is young Larry, keeps refilling her glass. And she kisses his cheek each time.

Then Doris, the petite wife, whispers, "You want to go home with us now, Rosie?"

"I bet my brother told you to ask me that, huh?" she hears herself say.

"Well, he has been frowning in your direction. I think it's time to leave."

"Okay, hon. I don't wanna disgrace the sacred name of O'Connor. Not disgrace my darling big brother."

In the dimness, the vagueness, she feels a strong arm holding her up and leading her through clusters of people to the door and out into the cold air of night. Her legs, skinny, veiny legs, can no longer support her warmed nebulous body. When she is being deposited in the back seat of a car, she realizes that it's Bob, her chaperone for the evening, who has been holding her.

"Is she asleep?" Rose hears Bob ask his wife.

"I think she's passed out."

Rose lets her eyes remain shut although she is not quite asleep. She does not hear all the couple—sitting close together in the front seat, not like lovers but conspirators—say to each other. But she does hear: "How come we have to get stuck with her?" Doris asks.

"I feel sorry for her. Poor old thing never has had much of a life," Bob says.

"Well, there's no excuse for someone drinking like she does. I think it's disgusting. How could anyone, especially an older person, act the way she does? You'd think she'd have more dignity."

"Ah, Doris, don't be such a damned Puritan. You don't know what kind of life the old gal has, living all alone in a boarding house, no husband, no kids, nobody."

"That's her fault. People make their own lives."

For some reason, Bob's words hurt her more than Doris'.

In front of her boarding house, Rose finds that she can stand up now on her own legs after struggling out of the car. Bob holds her arm as she climbs the three cement steps, then the three wooden porch steps. Her head and eyes seem cleared but, when she calls "goodnight" to Doris, she realizes her tongue has not thinned down as yet.

"You've done it again, Rose, dear," she hears a voice sing-song inside her. "You've loused it up good this time. You've ruined the few years you've got left."

She pats Bob on his narrow shoulder, says, "Thanks, darling," unlocks her door and enters her room that is mostly brown.

**Y**OU SEE AGAIN the little lady standing before the mirror attached to a dresser that is of the same distant vintage as she. She looks at her face, now reddish, with eyes whose lids droop and twitch.

"Hi, Rosie. Did you have fun?"

Jessie, the landlady, opens the door a crack and pretends



to knock, not making any sound with her chubby fist, before coming into the room.

"Oh, sure, hon," Rose replies and puts a smile on her trembling lips.

"And did you tell your brother about the house you want to rent?"

"Well, I've been thinking," she says, slowly, her tongue cooperating now. "I might be better off at St. Anselm's home. Can you imagine me taking care of a house and garden and lawn? You know what a heck of a time I have keeping this room clean. I think I'm just too old to start scrubbing floors and planting trees."

"I hope you aren't lettin' that brother of yours talk you out of that house."

"Oh, no, no. I'm going to see him tomorrow and discuss it."

"You'd better get to bed then. Or you'll look like death warmed over when—"

"He knows, Jessie. He knows."

Rose sighs. She continues to look at her reddish face in the mirror.

"Oh, I get it. You flubbed up tonight, huh?"

"Something like that. It's never that clear cut. Never."

"Well, I'll miss you. But you'll probably like it at that home after all. Guess I'd better get some shuteye. You better too. Nighty night."

Rose is alone now. She lights a cigarette and sits in the chair that has holes burned in it. She takes a deep drag on the cigarette and closes her eyes. Her lips, as they release a thin line of smoke, form words.

"Why did God make you, Rose O'Connor? Why? Why?"

## Taurus

M. E. GRENANDER

Lilacs wear their hearts  
on May's green sleeve: how mauve these  
adolescent arts!

# The Comb

CHARLES EDWARD EATON

The comb in her hand is like a brown wing  
Remembering its whole life as it swoops down  
Her hair, skimming the plump perch of her breasts—  
Now that I have given you this odd figure,  
See what you can do with it. I should say  
The hair is thick as a stalled waterfall.  
There is no scrap cartilage on the wing:  
You must provide the brisk animation.

Addenda: The seated woman is nude.  
There is a mirror like a silver vault;  
Perhaps the bird's remains are buried there—  
I have told you too much, I am compelled  
To control the sudden, deft, concealed swoon.  
So I leave you the inert assemblage.  
You must take the wing, feed it a phantom,  
Go down on your own the slick waterfall.

I come back into a room live with birds.  
They perch on her eyelids, her lips and breasts.  
The clipped, dismembered world is up in arms.  
The woman who was the recipient  
Later told me the story of her hair.  
It did things to men. It enflamed their myths.  
I had been right to leave and then return.

This is not a fable of pure freedom,  
But of rests, intervals, restitutions—  
I lend you my images for treatment.  
The nude woman, of course, went on to say  
That she welcomed me back with all her heart.  
I became animator and stylist.  
We had a very pleasant, long affair:  
In the tact of absence, I earned my wings.

# The Oak

DALE GOODHUE

AT EIGHT-THIRTY the convict gang had still not arrived. Dr. Carl Russel strolled down the smooth brick steps and along the drive toward the road. The morning air was sweet and cool on his face and on his bare arms. On both sides of him the trees hung heavy with gray moss and along the left his azaleas were blooming—the bright rush of pink and white that stayed for only two weeks in April. Those azaleas were his own plants, brought from the nursery by him fifteen years ago, planted in the ground by him, nursed and watched by him almost every day in all that long time. Once someone had said they were his children but that wasn't true. He had no children and the azaleas weren't children. They were plants—rich green, growing, and fragilely beautiful with this one quick bloom. In another week he knew the petals would fall to the ground, shrinking immediately into yellow chips, then curling into nothing. It made their beauty matter more to him

He stopped at the tree the convicts were going to take down. It was a giant oak, its trunk five feet across. The tree had been here long before he came. While he called the azaleas his own, the tree had always seemed to be a part of the permanent landscape, its roots stretching deep into the earth like long multiple fingers, holding the ground together almost, connecting deep down with the other fundamental features of the earth. But he couldn't ignore that the tree was dying now. One by one the branches were splintering off in the wind or falling of their own dead weight. In the last hurricane two of those giant limbs had crashed to the ground, smashing themselves to pieces, covering the yard with broken crooked branches and great mounds and burrows of the gray draping moss, like a huge amorphous corpse with its skin slowly dissolving off in the rain. It made no sense to leave the tree to disintegrate slowly. Particularly not this tree.

It deserved to come down quickly, all at once. In a way it was like a tooth that he had to pull in his office, with a small cavity on the enamel surface but entirely consumed with rottenness within, so that when he tried to extract it, it crumbled in his pliers into splinters and pulp and blood. But a tree could be chopped down. That was the advantage of a tree. A tree could be simply and cleanly chopped down where a tooth had to be picked out, splinter by splinter, even down to the roots where they fused into the bone.

He walked the rest of the way out to the road to pick up the paper, then back toward the house. He had made this walk many, many times—past the azaleas, past the wide oak to the road where the sun finally found its way around the shade leaves to warm him. He was sure he had walked faster when he was younger, chasing purpose and direction. Now he walked calmly, relaxing always, and it seemed that the change from his younger self had been so gradual that he hardly ever thought of it, and now he was surprised again that all that time had passed and he had nothing, really, to show for it. He had his land here—the oak, the house, the river—but that was hardly something he had made—hardly something he could point to as an accomplishment.

It was an old house, almost eighty years old, and he had lived in it for thirty of those years. He had even brought his wife here, lived with her here for the six years before they were divorced, all those years ago. It was a solid house with the pillared porch in front toward the road, toward the yard green with azaleas and oaks, and the one giant oak by the drive. On the other side there was the marsh, reaching far out to where the deep water of the river ran. He loved to walk up the front steps and see through the double french doors, through the width of the house and out over the golden marsh with the sun on it.

Walking around the house he stopped on the high bank over the marsh. It was almost high tide and the water filtered through the long coarse grass making it lush and green. He liked to think of the tide flooding and ebbing in an endless cycle feeding the vast marsh with its permanence. It was a meaning in itself, not requiring any explanations. When he was gone a hundred years it would still be here, quietly mocking any man who tried to measure his own life.



WHEN HE WENT back into the house he fixed himself his second brandy coffee and sat down with the paper. Alma, the colored woman, had come in. He heard her in the pantry, changing into her work dress. She wore short white uniform dresses and whenever she leaned over he could see her long black legs. She was forty but she was still a good looking woman. Those long legs were trim and firm and they drew his eyes sometimes when he didn't really want to look, drew them to the legs and up to the smoothly curving hips. He was amused at short skirts on a woman forty years old, and amused at himself for watching. Alma had only been with him a month. She was a good worker, always pleasant, and he liked having her around. When she came in from the pantry she had on her short dress and she busied herself straightening the room and moving the brandy closer to him on the table. He held the paper open in front of him and read, often looking up to watch Alma move about the room.

It was ten when the truck rolled down the drive and Dr. Russel went out to meet it. The truck parked on the lawn and the guard pulled up in his car behind it. The truck was an old army model with the canvass top stretched over metal hoops in the back and there was no grating or bars to hold the convicts in. Dr. Russel watched as the men climbed over the tailgate onto the ground. They were all colored.

"Dr. Russel?" The guard walked over to him with the shot gun under his arm.

"Good morning, sir," Dr. Russel said.

The guard was a big man, more tall and big framed than heavy. He gave a slight nod of his head to Dr. Russel. "Sorry we're late," he said. He turned and spat off to the side. "Had car trouble." He looked at Dr. Russel briefly and then back toward the truck. He had no hat and his black hair was uncombed and down over his collar. "Damn trucks break down all the time. The niggers fix them themselves and they don't give a damn." He spat again. "You show me the tree and we'll get started."

Dr. Russel walked with him to the tree. The colored prisoners in the dirty white suits didn't follow. They lounged around the back of the truck. One of them walked behind a bush and urinated.

"That's a big one," the guard said, standing under the tree. He walked around, sizing it up. "Jasens will have to go up and take off the big limbs," he said, coming back to the doctor. "That boy's more at home in a tree than he is on the ground." He laughed. "I swear he's more like a monkey than a man." The

guard carried his long shotgun under his arm as if it were a permanent part of him. When he moved between two bushes he leaned his body to point the gun down rather than take it out of the crook of his arm. Dr. Russel liked him. He watched the convicts pull their equipment out of the truck, then walked back to the house.

On a normal Thursday Dr. Russel would have gone into town to his office to work in other people's mouths, to fix their pains and cavities, or shine their teeth to a bright white. But each year he was a little less busy; each year a few more of his patients didn't make their semi-annual appointment, and there were hardly any new patients anymore. And there was one mother who held her eight year old son in front of her after his teeth had been cleaned and said in a determined voice, "Dr. Russel, I have to tell you I will never bring my children here again. I can hardly breathe for the smell of whiskey on your breath. You ought to be put in jail. You, a medical doctor."

"My good lady," Dr. Russel had explained, "I am not a medical doctor but a doctor of dentistry. And I'm very sorry if you confuse the smell of dental mouthwash for that of whiskey."

Still, there were always fewer patients. Once he had dreamed of starting a dental clinic, even spreading out to Jessup and Tybee, with two or three offices and a few other good men. He had even driven out to Jessup once just to look around, and walking the single main street had felt like it was already his. But that was in the beginning. Somewhere along the way things like that had ceased to be a possibility. Almost he didn't mind. He enjoyed having afternoons and occasional days off. It was only when he fell into seeing his life as a carved piece of time that could be looked at and compared with what might have been that he felt uneasy.

When Dr. Russel came out to the tree again he brought a cup of coffee for the guard and one for himself. He put brandy in both of them.

"Now that's real coffee," the guard said. He took another sip and turned to the doctor. "By the way, Dr. Russel, my name's Abe Kalder."

"Happy to meet you," Dr. Russel said. "I only wish I had been able to get you and your men out here three months ago."

Kalder nodded and took another drink. "We got a tight schedule. But you let me know if you got any other work to do sometime."

"I'd be pleased to, Mr. Kalder." He watched the convicts as they made ready to take down the tree.

Jasons was a tall thin man, very black. He strapped cleats to his boots and threw a rope through the crotch ten feet up where the trunk opened out to its thick branches. Some of the others held the rope on the other side. Jasons jerked on it once or twice, then in fifteen seconds he was up in the tree. Dr. Russel laughed to himself thinking of a monkey in a convict suit peering around in utter boredom. But Jasons didn't move like a monkey. He stretched his hands up and shifted his feet, then in a single graceful motion he was three feet higher, six and nine. He moved like a cat, balanced on the branches, soundless. The others down below watched him. When he lowered a rope they tied on a small chain saw and he hoisted it up. Then the branches began to fall, one after another. The prisoners on the ground dragged them to the side and set upon them with saws and axes until there was nothing left but tangled brush and naked six foot logs. Between buzzings of the saw and the crashings of the limbs Jasons moved through the branches, silent and deadly.

AFTER LUNCH Dr. Russel sat at the table and leafed through a dental journal. Alma was in the kitchen doing the dishes. She was singing softly to herself so he could only catch pieces of the tune, and he couldn't make out any of the words. Still he tapped the table with his fingers in time with her tune. He made himself a drink and he tried to read an article on dental surgery. He always thumbed through each journal as he received them but he very rarely read any articles any more. His practice was a fairly static affair. His skills were adequate to its needs and while he wanted to be sure he was aware of new developments, it seemed that most of the information reported in the journals was more specialized than he could use in his everyday practice. When there were special or difficult cases among his patients he always sent them to the specialists as did any other general practice dentist. Still he forced himself halfway through the article on dental surgery before he closed the magazine and set it on the table. He got up and stood in the doorway to the kitchen watching Alma for a moment. He could see the shape of her waist and hips through the dress as she stood at the sink. She was unaware of him. She continued to sing her song, her voice rough but true to each note. When she leaned forward the dress moved an inch up her legs and he could feel himself stirring to her. He was half surprised, pleased that at fifty-eight that part of him was still alive. He turned quietly and walked out to the front yard, taking his drink with him.

Mr. Kalder greeted him, still walking with his gun. He



pointed to the convict high in the branches. "Won't be long now, Dr. Russel," Kalder said. Jasons was working on the last two giant limbs. That and the trunk five feet across and fifteen feet high were the only things left. All the rest was litter on the ground, stripped and torn branches with half of the leaves yanked and turned so that the pale green underside stood out against the usual dark green. The cut limbs were sawed into lengths and thrown into a pile, half of them hollow with wet dark rot. Jasons floated through the arms of the tree to place his next cut.

"Confident bastard, ain't he," Kalder said. They watched for a few minutes.

"What happens to the wood?" Dr. Russel asked. "Will they use it for lumber?"

"Most of it ain't good for anything but firewood," Kalder said. "See how kinky and twisted those logs are. Most of these old oaks are like that. Course they may get something out of the trunk."

"I'd like to think it was helping build someone's house or store," Dr. Russel said, "instead of disappearing in smoke up some chimney."

Jasons' saw cut through the next to the last limb and it crashed to the ground. He climbed up the last arm of oak and began trimming off the branches.

"I guess you'll get it all down today," Dr. Russel said.

"Oh yeah," Kalder said. "Then tomorrow we can come back and clean up the pieces."

Dr. Russel nodded and walked toward the house. Looking back he saw the trunk standing out against the sky, awkward now, with blunt stumps where each of the limbs had been, and Jasons with the buzz saw screaming away on the last limb.

In the house Dr. Russel looked for Alma in the kitchen but she wasn't there. The pantry door was partly open and he looked in, surprising her with a bottle of his bourbon and a half full glass. He stood for a minute and she stared back at him. "I won't drink much," she said finally, smiling.

"No, I'm sure you won't," Dr. Russel said. He stepped close and took the bottle out of her hand. "Do you always make yourself at home with your employer's liquor?" Her black eyes looked back at him out of her smooth black face. He had not stepped back away from her and he could feel the closeness of her. It seemed to him that having caught her in this crime he had something over her, as if it gave him license to do something he wouldn't have ordinarily thought of. She didn't move away



from him at all. She held the glass in front of her as if interrupted in raising it to her lips.

"I'm sorry if it's such a big thing," she said.

He looked at her and then stepped back. "It isn't such a big thing," he said. "Just ask me next time." He handed her back the bottle and left the pantry. He poured himself a drink in the dining room, then walked out to the bank overlooking the marsh. His hand holding the drink was shaking. The tide was going out now and there wasn't the cleanness and fullness of high water. The water had pulled away uncovering the mud along the bank and he could smell the heavy smell of it. Tiny black fiddler crabs were scattering between their small round holes in the mud and he watched without seeing them. He imagined himself brushing against Alma, struggling for her glass, touching her. It was insane to be aroused this way. He was fifty-eight. She was a colored maid. Apparently she was also a petty thief. He wondered what would have happened if he had wrestled her to the floor. He took a swallow of his drink and shook his head, laughing at himself. Old man's fantasies. He was ridiculous.

He hadn't been with woman for eight years now, not since a desperate and awkward affair with one of his secretaries. That had been uncomfortable and pointless and he had come to feel he was better off alone. But now here was this black legged, short skirted Alma, and she and his gonads were making a fool of him. He looked out over the low tide marsh and drank. The alcohol had no taste in his mouth. It was keeping up with his brain, holding a soft haze over everything he saw. He turned to walk toward the front yard and was halfway around the house when he heard a shot. The guard's shotgun. He started to run, floating and cushioned by the alcohol, imagining a convict lying bleeding on the ground. Around the corner he could see the prisoners gathered around something on the ground. When he got there he saw it was a possum, the bloody furry body curled into a death pose.

"He's a mean looking son of a bitch," one of the prisoners said. "Look at his hair. See that black around the ears and on his paws."

"Shit man, what do you know?" another said.

"I know a goddamn possum."

Dr. Russel looked down at the animal. It was bigger than he expected a possum to be. The eyes were open, brown and soft, and the mouth was wide, the lips pulled back from the teeth. The teeth were like matching curved blades, each one made of tiny knives of white sharp ivory. The possum's mouth was

still snarling, rigid in a snarl at death.

"I hope you don't mind," the guard said to him. "I would have asked if it was okay only I was pressed for time." He smiled over at the giant hollow trunk lying on its side. "He was in there all the time. When it came down he took off across the yard. Would have made it only he was unlucky enough to come by me."

"Yeah," Dr. Russel said. He looked down at the animal. "It was lucky you were quick enough to get him." The guard was reloading his gun. "What will you do with him?"

"Well if you don't want it the niggers will take it," the guard said. "They eat it or feed it to the dogs or something. I don't know. But they'll take it. Long as you don't want it."

"No. They can have it."

"I guess he figured he'd found a pretty good tree," the guard said, standing over the animal. "The whole damn thing is rotten and hollow." He nudged the possum's head with the barrel of the gun. "Didn't figure on us pulling it down."

Dr. Russel turned suddenly to the prisoners. "Which one of you is going to take him?"

"They'll take care of it," the guard said.

"I'll take him." One of the men stepped forward. It was Jasons.

Dr. Russel nodded. "Okay. Good. You take him then."

The guard looked at him and shrugged, motioning Jasons to take the possum.

Dr. Russel moved away toward the house. He stopped at the stump five feet across, a flat table above the grass. There was rottenness even here, but it was only a narrow oval hole that went down into the wood. The guard had followed him and ran his hand over the rings made by the grain. "That was a fine old tree," he said.

"I hated to have it chopped down," Dr. Russel said. "But it's either that or let the wind take it bit by bit." He looked into the dark hollow. "You've got to get the stump out too. Will you be able to get the stump out by tomorrow?"

"We don't do stumps," the guard said. "We just take down the tree. What you want to do on the stump is burn it out. Start right here," he pointed to the hole, "and just keep on burning until you can break up what's left with a sledge."

"Isn't that part of the job?"

"No. Just the tree. That's all we do. There ain't no easy way except to burn it and you can do that as easy as us."

"But you have to take it out," Dr. Russel said. "That was part of the job."

"No sir. I could put these niggers to work on that stump for a week and they wouldn't have it half done. You might as well take after it with a carving knife. It ain't like you could just pull it out of the ground."

Dr. Russel was staring at the guard vacantly. Finally he shook his head. "I thought it was all part of the job," he said. Again the tree was like the rotten tooth he had extracted, with its splintered roots embedded deep in the bone. The roots would not come. Each time he exposed the dull bloody enamel and grasped it with his pliers it broke off again, always leaving more beneath the surface. He stared at the stump in front of him. "Goddamn thing," he said and walked back to the house.

HE SAT OVER the article on dental surgery, drinking, while Alma prepared dinner. The article went nowhere. It seemed to have lost its point before it had completely stated it. He didn't understand why he read this pointless magazine instead of having his own clinic. He tried to figure out where things had turned around on him. Life was like a sine wave he thought. It rises up and up, until it finds its peak, and then it turns and winds down again. He wanted to know where it was that he had peaked out. That would be something at least, to know that. But he couldn't find any time where he could say, yes, that was it, the best and highest part. There wasn't any time like that.

When Alma called to him that dinner was ready he pulled himself out of the easy chair and moved to the dining room table. He stumbled as he pulled out his chair. Alma teased him, "You be careful you don't knock my cooking on the floor Dr. Russel."

"I have the greatest respect for your cooking, Alma," he said. He watched her move around the table. Her legs and hips swayed gently as she moved. She knew he was watching her. "Did you enjoy your drink this afternoon," he said. He could feel her breasts pulling his eyes.

"Yes sir I did," she said. "I'm sorry I upset you. You're very kind to me."

He asked her about possums, how they were cooked, and told her about the one in his tree. She said he should have kept it. "I would have cooked it for you," she said. "You might like it." He watched her when she walked back into the kitchen, felt her presence on the other side of the wall as he ate. He could offer her another drink. What would happen then? When she came to clear away the dishes he got up and helped her, something he had never done. With both of them trying to get through



the kitchen door at once he pushed against her. She laughed and pulled away. She stood at the sink with her back to him. He could go up behind her. He saw her buttocks under the thin white dress, her waist, her smooth back hiding her from him. She was humming softly, her voice low as if she were whispering in his ear. It was inevitable he told himself. Today, tomorrow. Before he knew exactly what he was doing he pushed toward her, coming gently behind her and held his glass out for her to drink. His arm and his body swelled against the curves of her.

She looked sharply at him and the glass he offered and pulled away. "Now what you want?" she said. Her voice had started hard but ended softer. "Now what you want giving me another drink?"

He shrugged. "A little drink never hurt." His voice sounded slurred even to his own ears. He straightened himself. "I just wanted to let you know that I didn't mind you drinking this afternoon."

Her eyes laughed at him and he held out the drink for her. She took it, her fingers touching his as they met at the round glass half full with golden bourbon. She was watching him with her black eyes while she put his glass to her lips. He could feel his body coming alive. "Now you go back out there and let me finish these dishes, okay?" she said. She pushed him softly away from the sink with her hand against his arm. His arms moved automatically to encircle her and pull her to him.

"You going crazy, Dr. Russel?" she said and pulled smoothly out of his arms. "Now you go in there and sit down. You get out of my kitchen."

He smiled and backed away toward the door, dazed by being so close to her.

She was shaking her head, laughing. "I'm not your woman," she smiled at him. "I'm just the colored lady come in to clean up. Now you go on."

Dr. Russel dropped himself into his chair. He could feel a grin on his face and it made him laugh. He opened the journal and thumbed through it, watching the pages fall one by one. He couldn't believe what he had just done. Like an idiot he had tried to hold her and she had known what he wanted. Still she was smiling at him and he felt alive and pounding. So what if he had had a lot to drink. He knew what was happening, and she did too. She knew it too.

Twenty minutes later Alma said goodnight and he followed her out the door apologizing. "Honestly I don't know what happened," he said, hurrying beside her. "There's no excuse. I hope I didn't frighten you."



She was laughing. "You just keep remembering that I'm the cleaning lady," she said, "then we'll be all right." At the road she made him stop. "Now you go back before you fall down."

"All right," he said. "Goodnight Alma."

He turned and wandered back toward the house. The sky still held the last touch of daylight and the stars were just showing. He could feel the cool air on his face and it sobered him. In the morning he would drive to his office and fill several cavities, pull several teeth. Without even thinking about it he would banter with his patients for the short while before his hands and his tools were in their mouths. Then he would clean and check their aging teeth. It required no real thought or effort. Nothing required that much thought or effort anymore. Except this stump. He stopped before it. It was like a platform, a table in the dark. Nothing except this stump and now Alma. He sat down on the wide smooth wood, tilting his head back to look up at the stars. He couldn't quite focus on them. Too much drink. Too much Alma. He shook his head and laughed to himself. She would be back in the morning, back to sing and steal his bourbon, back day after day. He sat on the stump and smiled up to the night. He was ridiculous, a ludicrous old man chasing after his maid, chasing after Alma with her short skirts and her black eyes that seemed to know just what was happening. She must be laughing at him now. But he didn't mind. The night filled him with its soft calmness and he was still smiling when he pulled himself up and walked back to his house.

## Haiku

P. W. GRAY

In my vacant lot  
Small boys, shining in the dark,  
Dig clear to China.

## The Joys of Noise

LARRY BOWMAN

There is more here  
than meets the eye—  
(Blind judge of key!)  
Lyric notes lie  
so tongue-in-cheek  
on sheets so fallow.

Each quiet page  
bars meaning. (Sounds  
a bit bizarre  
at first.) But nouns  
sing best, like spar-  
rows, out of cages.

## Miracle Of The Flower Boxes

TERRY STOKES

You were growing toward the sun, some-  
body told you that was the thing to do,  
so, that's where you headed. Each morning  
you had that one thing in mind, & it  
looked like it was brought up well. No  
starving in weak soil; no waiting for  
the water. One of my favorite jokes:  
An angel & a friend of hers climb this  
tree with this anchor, & what they do with  
this anchor, they bake it in 13  
languages, & they ask the anchor about  
its heritage. & the anchor says, "I  
was born where they rust hearts, &  
your eyes bulge with insincerity. I  
was born where they think of you as  
a little willow, or a seedling. I was  
born where noodle pudding was supposed  
to solve everything, & it nearly did."  
& then, the tree said, "What the hell's  
a flower box, what the hell's an angel,  
& is a miracle like a boned fish?"

## Poems For Others

TERRY STOKES

They are no more difficult  
than lying to your mother.

Passing a brain-cell on to a  
captured duck. Look, his feathers

are matted. He has only one eye.  
He doesn't enjoy his feet. He shits

in the street. I will dine out tonight,  
a ripple in a shallow trout stream.

All my friends glazed, dead, or  
limping to a silent table.

## First Garden

SUSAN BARTELS

It happens too quickly.  
I am unprepared for green shoots  
unfolding their narrow bodies.  
Days ago I planted  
expecting weeks to pass  
before the smooth soil  
would be disturbed.  
Now hillocks like giant ants might make  
appear in every row,  
and the stalks are taking over.  
Hour by hour  
I watch them grow like desire,  
urgently,  
and remember Jack  
who was also frightened  
by such magic.

## It's a Big Country

PHYLLIS BROOKS

After two years I eat the dust of these Spanish street-names  
that ring hollow in the halls of my ears

Far from home  
the house whose walls receive my sloping shadow is painted  
someone else's beige.

So good luck to the birds who moved right in  
—no trouble at all—  
and built their nest (carefully selected straw and twigs)  
inside the empty speaker shell  
bearded tufts

sticking out under the patio roof. on each side

... the speaker shell I left empty, wanting  
the quiet to mull over the east and west of my long distances.

and nothing in the whole of California to hold down the helium  
of the other half of me.

And now the incessant racket of cheepers and peepers  
just come alive.

Whoever owns the nest  
—taut little body perched on my TV antenna—  
cocks his head towards the straight, slender arrow of the present  
its swooping dangers  
and will not ruffle a feather for all my wagonloads  
of memories and remorse.



# I Got Shoes

CARL SCHIFFMAN

FROM THE thirty-second floor of the Mercantile Bank, it was possible to look almost straight down through the huge glass windows to the graveyard of Trinity Church. The view was not popular, and on this as on several previous lunch hours, the young man with the pale blond hair had the row of desks near the windows all to himself.

He was sitting on the very edge of one of the desks, perched forward, his chin resting on his palms, like a misplaced gargoyle, contemplating the odd pattern of dark and light squares made by the gravestones, noting the way the curving dirt walks, newly shoveled after last night's snow, had the freehand tracery of a child's drawing. He thought of how he'd like to bring the kids here and show them the view, and smiled as he thought of the kind of reception they'd be likely to get. He shook his head violently, his long hair glistening in the tinted sunlight, and then snapped his head back sharply, each hair with uncanny discipline flying exactly into place.

"Hey you, ragamuffin," yelled Mrs. Santiago, who was in charge of his unit of stock transfer clerks, laughing at her own joke, "better get away from the window before people start giving us loans instead of asking us for them. What'll we do then?" She laughed again, encouraging two or three of the boy's fellow workers, who were sitting at their desks eating lunch out of paper bags, to laugh with her in feeble sycophantic chorus. "And don't break no windows by jumping out of them either; we need to keep our fingers warm so we can make production this afternoon."

The boy could tell that Santiago was in good humor, not angry so much as putting on a show for the other employees, showing them, at his expense, what a terrific wit she was; *witch* she was, he mused, which she was. He ignored her, the way most of the other employees tried to do most of the time.

Santiago was crazy they had decided the first day, "highly neurotic and hypertensively anxious," one of the college kids had concluded, having just been the target of a Santiago tantrum for having typed, on three successive transfers, the wrong date of sale. "Nobody who isn't crazy could care so much about this shit."

The other workers, more cowed than the college boy or less psychologically acute, or simply needing the money more, had shown only minimal signs of rebellion. The one exception had been a heavyset Negro woman, who had slammed her typewriter back into her desk, set her counter to zero and stalked out, prompting a disquisition on ingratitude by Mrs. Santiago that cut half an hour out of their morning's work and cost them half their lunch hour to make up for lost production.

"Hey ragamuffin!" There was no humor in the voice now. "Jimbo, I said for you to get away from that window. I don't want you hanging there."

Jim stole a last look down at the church: the narrow steeple seemed to have retracted itself, to have drawn back into the body of the church, like an effort not quite worth the making.

"How long have you been working here?" Santiago was waiting for him at his own desk. She leaned close, oppressing him with her perfume. Her voice was pitched low for her, confidential, solicitous, "Ain't you made enough to buy some clothes? You must of got three checks by now." Her voice got a little louder. She was right next to Jim, hovering over him. "I mean, you don't gotta look like that, do you, a nice-looking young kid like you?" Grinning at the other clerks, all creeping back from lunch now, Santiago reached down and mussed Jim's hair. "All right," she shrilled, "make production!" Jim snapped his head back like a whip, each blond hair again miraculously falling into place.

Ignoring Mrs. Santiago, he reached to his right, took a thick master off the pile, put it on the machine and started typing. Copying a computer print-out, he entered the name, address and code number of the new owner, the seller's number and date of sale. He removed the form, separated the attachments, clicked the counter once and reached again for the pile to his right.

Santiago had moved on, was checking somebody else's work. Jim looked up and surveyed the unit. He could hardly believe he was still here. Each day, starting with the very first, he had told himself would be the last, that he would never come back, and now he was well into his fourth week. He needed the money, Santiago was right enough about that, he thought, starting to

type again, but not about what he needed it for: the School needed the money, that was the point, and how the hell would the Santiagos ever understand that?

"What is this, April?" Santiago had pounced on a new worker, a middle-aged man, white, dignified and very well dressed. "April was over ten months ago, or maybe it ain't happened yet, depending on whether you live in the past or future." She tore up the certificate, shredding it in front of the man's eyes, half-spitting at him as she spoke. "These things cost three cents each, some of them five, and that's not so important either, but it costs us time and we got a quota. That's what these counters are, see? And every time I get a stupid like you, it's like we start clicking them backwards. You take away from the good peoples' work. Now what month is this?" The man mumbled something. "I can't hear you—what month did you say it was?"

Everyone in the unit was watching now, only one woman kept on typing, not losing rhythm, even though her eyes were on the man. "I know what month it is," the man mumbled, trying to hold firm.

"You tell me," Santiago shrilled, "tell us all. I wouldn't want nobody else here to be typing the wrong month. What month is it?" she yelled directly into the man's ear.

The man grew rigid, then seemed to shrivel inside his expensive suit. "February," he said. "It's February."

"What the hell were you worrying about—paying your income tax?" Santiago queried in her "joking" voice, "stay here and you won't have to worry about no upper brackets." The typewriters started clattering again. Santiago walked away from the man as though she'd forgotten his existence. She whirled on the group. "Let me hear them counters click! You all know what month it is—make production!"

Jim kept expecting the entire floor to become still, transfixed by one of Santiago's tirades, but it never happened. His group was isolated, separated by a wide fringe of aisle, by a bank of computers and rows of filing cabinets from the rest of the Mercantile staff. Mrs. Santiago ran the overflow unit, what Jim understood as Mercantile Bank's solution to its uneven work flow, and device to avoid paying overtime to its regular staff. In Mrs. Santiago's unit, people were hired from day to day, paid only by the hour, and told only at the end of the day whether to report the next day or not. A goodly number who were told to come back the next day never showed up again, and some who turned up two or three days—or even weeks—later, were simply put back to work the day they showed up, no questions asked.



How could I ever explain this to the kids, Jim wondered, how long would it take me to explain to them what all this is about, do I even understand it myself?

"Oh, you are just stupid! Stupid, stupid, stupido!" exploded Santiago at somebody at the far end. "You type J.T.W.R.O.S., JTWROS, *Jesus, Teacher, Who Redeems Our Sins*. You come to this country, damn it, you learn how to speak our language!"

Across the wide aisle to Jim's left was a unit of regular transfer clerks, all girls, their machines clattering and counters clicking all day long, seemingly oblivious to Mrs. Santiago and her crew of cast-offs. Jim could not understand what kind of creatures these girls were, who could, as far as he could tell, compress everything human about themselves into endless small explosions of gossip, debris of which, drifting across the aisle to Jim, seemed to punctuate every pause in the clatter of their machines. Jim wondered what mindlessness preserved in them the capacity to go on hitting those numbered keys, recording transactions he could hardly (not for a minute) believe they understood.

They didn't laugh at him though, the way the young male clerks and computer operators always did. Jim knew how concerned his fellow workers—even the ones in Mrs. Santiago's unit, who could hardly afford to have pretensions—were about dress. The men, the younger ones at least, all had stylishly mod touches, wide collars, belled and flagrantly patterned pants. The Computer Department in particular, in the last weeks, had begun sprouting hair in all directions: beards blossoming overnight, sideburns racing each other down the sides of the same face, giving a slightly lopsided, out-of-kilter look to all the otherwise blandly interchangeable young faces.

Even the School, Jim noted reluctantly, had hardly been immune. The children, some no older than six or seven, had chattered about clothes with an intensity that unselfconsciously parodied their elders' concern. Black culture, Jim thought, like that of the low class whites, overvalued clothes beyond all measure. It was an attitude they hoped they could get to in the kids, to teach them that the reality of themselves was more important than the appearance they made, that if they were certain of who they were, what they looked like was of very small importance indeed. Jim, never having been poor until the last few months, was vastly indifferent to dress: his current garb of patched pants, workshirt and paint-stained (from re-decorating one of the classrooms) boots intruded on his consciousness only when a snicker or muttered comment, usually from one of the regular workers, making him instantly uneasy,



made him also vaguely aware that his mode of dress, however unintentionally, reproved theirs, was an implied insult to what they cared about and thought important.

The School, Jim thought, would have to undo so much, would have to start by unteaching these children, all so very young, so much of the little they had already learned. It was worth it, Jim knew, more than anything else the School was worth whatever had to be done to keep it going, even having to do without much food or any recreation, without any place to sleep but a couch in back of one of the classrooms. It was even worth, although more and more he was coming to doubt this, putting up with Mrs. Santiago.

Jim looked over again at the rows of girls, typing away. How much of the School, of what it was based on, could any of them understand? Nothing, he thought, just nothing. They were so much a part of what the School was trying to fight, so perfectly attuned to their own submission, that they couldn't even sense discord, had nothing left inside themselves to fight with. He should be grateful to Mrs. Santiago, he thought, at least she made the system visible, there was no adjusting to her.

The day before, she had violated her usual practice of assaulting scapegoats and had taken on the whole unit at once. Her assault had been so virulent that half a dozen of the regular typists had actually stopped work to listen. Jim remembered their heads turning, the unnatural stillness. Santiago had been told that the previous week's production of her unit had fallen below even whatever minimal standard had been set for it.

"You listen to me," she shouted at them all, coming back to the unit at a half-run after getting the bad news. "You stop hitting those mistakes and listen to me now. We have fallen behind." She said this last very quietly. "We have been falling behind," she almost whispered, "And they say it's my fault, that the work they've given me to do has not been getting done. Well, they don't know who they've given me to do it with. And if that don't bother them, it don't bother me. But you can forget it!" she screamed suddenly, turning typists' heads on half the floor. "You can forget you ever heard about coffee breaks, or wash up time, or getting in a couple of minutes late because the regulars do! I'm going to stand here and watch you every minute! And now I want you to watch me." She went to the front row and half-dragged a thin red-headed boy out of his chair. "Just watch me!"

They all stood, moving closer, as Santiago ripped a half-typed certificate out of the machine and threw it blindly to one side. She grabbed a new certificate. "Continental Tractor, one hundred share, February 17th; watch me!" The machine burst

into motion, Santiago's fingers racing over the keys like a legion of little men in a television ad. The keys struck so closely one on the other that the sound blurred and the transfer seemed to jump, self-typed, out of the machine. The counter had hardly clicked when the second certificate, "Harmon Mines, one thousand shares," was in the machine and half-finished. Santiago went on like a circus act, typing more transfers in ten minutes than Jim had ever completed in an hour. "Now you see," she said, getting up from the machine, "what the company expects its regular employees to do. I want just half, just a skinny spastic half of that out of you, or I'm going to have your backsides heaved the hell out of here. Nobody's going to go on telling me I'm not getting my job done! All right, move! Make production! You damn spastics," she muttered to herself, turning away from them, pretending not to be aware they had all heard her.

"This is the Mercentile Bank," she had announced when they came into work the next morning, "It is a proud institution and you ought to be proud to be working for it. Without the work of this institution, the American economy might tremble. And if it was pushed hard enough, maybe it would even fall."

Where do I stand to push, wondered Jim, and did they give her that speech on cards so she could learn it? He decided he had earned a minute in the men's room. The window at lunch-time and his hourly trips to the water cooler, or to the bathroom, where he looked out the window there, were all, Jim was convinced, that was keeping him sane, giving him some sense of a rational order, even if only in death and the ceremonies of dying. He looked down at the graveyard. They would have to bring the kids there some afternoon.

The door behind Jim squeaked slightly, he turned, Santiago's voice began bouncing off the tiles: "It's been ten minutes now, Jimbo, you get your ass the hell out of there; or do you want me to have to come in and wipe it for you? I'm waiting."

Jim never doubted it. He didn't even think to be angry, conscious perhaps that he had been caught breaking a rule. He became immediately worried about whether he should complete the imposture by flushing a toilet on the way out or simply go to the door, disdaining pretense. He hesitated, then thought of the kids at the School, of the two months' rent behind. He kicked open one of the cubbies and kicked down at the handle at the base of the commode. It half-flushed. Jim bent over and depressed the pedal with his hand, angry and humiliated now, cheeks flaming as he pushed his way out.

Santiago was waiting for him in the corridor just beyond the door. "Had to flush twice to get it all down, huh? What a

man!" She reached out as though to muss Jim's hair, but thought better of it, reading his eyes. She covered smoothly, raising the hand to her own hair, patting contentedly. "That isn't what I mean when I say to make production."

Walking back up the long aisle to the unit, passing the lines of anonymous regulars, none of whom ever seemed to look at him directly, although he could always feel their eyes on his back afterwards, Jim heard a flapping noise, then several steps later almost stumbled as the sole of his boot, torn entirely free of the upper, doubled under itself, throwing him off-balance as though he were walking on stones. His ears burning, but with Santiago mercifully ahead of him, Jim went on down the aisle; he held his foot low, just skimming it over the smooth plastic tile, not allowing the leather space to double over in again.

When he sat at his typewriter and crossed his legs, the torn sole drooped straight to the floor. Hurriedly, he crossed his legs the other way. Jim was among the last to leave that evening, giving Santiago a good ten minutes' lead. As far as he could tell, none of the few regular typists working late looked up at him as he went down the aisle. He took a bus home for the first time since starting work, conscious, as he always was, of how each penny spent was future time stolen away from the kids.

THE SCHOOL rented a four-story tenement in that part of the Lower East Side first imposed on by Manhattan's grid-iron, where the Avenues were given letters instead of names. Jim got off the bus at Avenue B and unselfconscious now about the sole went flip-flopping down the street, walking around garbage whenever he didn't absolutely have to walk through it, stopping to buy two gallons of milk and a loaf of day-old bread before unlocking the heavy front door, lined all around with tin, and climbing the three flights of stairs past the classrooms to the teachers' living quarters that shared space with a large playroom on the top floor.

Actually, only three of them lived there. There were five teachers in all, and the Director, but the other two teachers had families, or were on welfare, and could live at home, while the Director had published several articles about the School in magazines or educational journals, and made enough, publishing and lecturing, as well as by occasionally appearing on a radio talk show, to afford a small apartment in the neighborhood. The Director was a man in his late forties though, with two advanced degrees, and none of the others begrudged him the small luxury of his own apartment. They knew he spent long hours fund raising, and put every cent he could spare into the School's expenses.



David and Maggie, the two other live-in teachers, had each been with the School for almost two years now, or ever since its inception. During the first year, when foundation money was still available and the School had had ten teachers, all decently paid, they had lived in their own homes like everybody else, but this year, when the funds dried up, they had decided to stay with it, giving up all "normal" rewards for a chance to preserve what they saw as one of the few hopes for reaching the increasing number of children for whom the "system" could only be an enemy or alien force.

What was unique or special about the School, Jim, whose one degree was in history not education, had decided, what turned an ordinary tenement into a magic place, was that the School actually listened to children: it allowed the children to feel that their out-of-school experience, what they already knew and had learned of life was valuable, was where learning had already taken place, and was not something to be ashamed of, outgrown or pushed out of sight. The School helped kids to be themselves, to grow and think in terms of their own experience, not what the outside "straight" or "establishment" world thought or would like to pretend that experience was supposed to be.

In most schools, Jim knew, instead of learning what they were taught, for which they could find no basis in themselves or echo in their own experience, these kids only learned to be ashamed: of themselves, their neighborhood, their families, everything. Learning for them, in the regular schools, was nothing more than an accretion of shame. It was as if the schools many years ago had decided on taking these American kids away from their homes, away from everything they knew, as the only possible way of saving them. Of saving whom? And for what?

David and Maggie, since being forced into relative and unfamiliar poverty, having both come from "good homes," had begun to make a fetish of asceticism. They had become as scrupulously self-denying as a pair of anchorites, starving themselves in the wilderness of the Lower East Side, subsisting on macrobiotic food in lieu of roots. Having been lovers since shortly after the first weeks of school two years previously, they compensated, if that's the word, for having pleasures from which they excluded Jim, by taking an inordinate interest in his process of ascetic growth. They both claimed to envy his unattached state, believing, as the earlier anchorites undoubtedly did, that another person too closely held, or for too long, becomes in time a possession too, and drags one down with its weight of sin.

Jim's blamelessness becoming thus their greater purity, Maggie and David were on his back all the time, polishing him



with much the same spirit as their parents might have polished a brand new car. Although this evening they chastized him cruelly for buying even the day-old bread, they felt his continuing ordeal under the infamous Mrs. Santiago was providing a compensatory purification, a learned negation of self for the cause of the School. They would not hear of his quitting.

"It's only two weeks more," Maggie said, smearing glue on the bottom of Jim's boot, adding cardboard for body and pressing the bent sole back into place, "then it's my turn."

"You can surely put up with anything for two weeks," David said. "We've told the kids all about Mrs. Santiago, and they don't exactly understand what it is you're doing, but they think you're great. And so do we. Don't we, Mag?" He put his arm around her, cupping one breast: a gesture he never seemed to think might be unsettling to Jim.

Maggie finished the shoe and passed it to Jim. "I don't see why Jim couldn't have taken both shoes off and walked home barefoot; don't you think so, Dave? I mean, thirty cents is a lot of money for just a couple of miles on a bus. Fifteen cents a mile. Isn't that as much as it costs to rent a car?"

Jim shook his head, blond hair scattering wildly in all directions. "Did you ever think," he asked Maggie, "that it was wrong of you to take free meals when you worked as a waitress, that that betrayed the whole idea of needing as little as possible from the system so we can be as free of it as we can be?"

Maggie was angry. "I always had what we were giving the kids here. I read the School menu every day before I went to work. It made me feel I was still here."

"And of course she really was," David put in, "just the way you are now. As far as we're concerned you're still here teaching. Who the hell of our kids ever heard of the Mercantile Bank? You're their teacher, that's all they know, and they love you."

"Two more weeks, that's nothing," Maggie said, reaching out and putting David's hand back on her breast. She leaned back into David's arms and smiled at Jim.

**T**HE NEXT DAY was payday, and Jim, knowing the money was his only to hold until he got back to the School, nevertheless felt a spring in his step as he walked to work. The weather had turned warmer overnight and he had to leap-frog puddles all through the pock-marked Lower East Side until he reached the financial district, where the streets had been shoveled clear since immediately after the last snowfall and the white granite pavement was sparkling like crystal in the February sunlight.

In the churchyard, patches of earth had appeared between the stones and alongside the paths. The wooden benches were clear and a few early and hardy souls were sitting there, well-bundled, reading newspapers.

The early morning flew: Jim typing quickly and for once accurately until Santiago, moving almost furtively between their desks, began to give out the paychecks. Usually, she used this time for brief admonitory lectures on the quality of the employee's work and the improvement she hoped, expected, or doubted to see. These admonitions, meant to be *sotto voce*, were always audible to the entire unit and probably, week to week, provoked as much baleful anticipation as the paychecks presaged reward. It was as if, the college boy had said once, Santiago couldn't give anybody anything, even if it wasn't hers to begin with, without trying to take something away from them at the same time. It was his opinion that she took away more than she gave: her abuse being neatly portioned to the size of the check.

Mrs. Santiago had paused at the desk of the very well-dressed man she had abused for typing the wrong date of sale. "I hope you realize," she whispered loudly, "that this ain't no better than charity, that the only reason we don't call it stealing is that I'm putting the money in your hand instead of you snatching it from my purse. But of course you wouldn't know nothing about common theft; you just forget how to type numbers twelve, fifteen times a day. Your little pinkie just goes wandering all over everywhere. Well, that ain't no little secretary you're playing with now, so you keep your little pinkie where it belongs and try to see if you can earn your living here next week for a change."

"Not likely, Mrs. Santiago," said the man, rising to his feet and closing the typewriter gently into the desk, "not at all likely. Because this is the end of it, my last few minutes with you and I've worked an hour today for nothing just for the privilege of having it.

"I do not understand," he went on quietly, "how a half-literate woman like you gets to be put in charge of anything. I can't imagine what the bank had in mind, unless they simply don't realize . . ." He paused to shake his head wonderingly. "Where I worked last we would not have allowed you in, except nights to clean the offices, we would have been ashamed for ourselves." The typists in the regular unit across the aisle had begun to sense something was happening and were stopping work and looking in Santiago's direction. Jim could see she was aware of it.

The man turned away from Mrs. Santiago and looked care-

fully at the other workers: he seemed to Jim to be memorizing their faces, or waiting for one of them to answer a question he was still baffled by. He made a courtly half-bow to them all, then vanished beyond the computer section on his way to the elevators.

Mrs. Santiago did not show herself, other than by her unaccustomed silence, to have been affected by the man's recital. She seemed to Jim more pensive than angry. He said "Thank you," when she gave him his check, and saw her eyes widen, although whether they were viewing his words as sarcastic or friendly he could not say.

The unit remained subdued for the balance of the morning: Mrs. Santiago sat at the man's desk for a time, sorting through his undone work, then distributed it among the other typists. At ten to twelve, just a trifle earlier than usual, Jim left his desk and started walking toward the bathroom to wash up.

As he turned down the aisle between his unit and the regular typists', he felt a sudden lightness at his right foot, then fell forward three or four steps, having almost to run to keep his balance. The freshly melted snow had done in the freshly glued boot: it gaped open at one end like a snout, showing mangled cardboard being chewed on by the ends of rusty nails. Mrs. Santiago was at his side in an instant.

"I told you to buy shoes," she shrilled, "you college graduate Orphan Annie. All the advantages and you can't even keep your feet clean. They tell me I'm supposed to be a college student," she announced to the regular typists, "my spastic hunt-and-peck primadonnas think they shouldn't be bossed by nobody without an education because they're all so high class. Like this kid here: he's got a B—something. What is it, kid, a B. A., a B-plus, a B. O.? Come on, kid, tell us how your education on top of making you a lousy typist taught you how to be above wearing shoes. After all, us lousy working people, we always worry how we look.

"You listen to me, kid," Santiago went on, dropping her voice and moving so close to Jim he became blindly afraid she was going to press her body against his and could hardly follow what she was saying. "You got your paycheck, you go down now on your lunch and buy shoes." She looked at him closely; Jim could scarcely unravel the strange mixture of affection and contempt in her look. "Jee-sus!" She turned away as the lunch-bell sounded and the regular typists began to swarm past them in the aisle. She went straight for the elevators, not looking back once.

Several of the typists, most of them quite young, tittered at Jim in passing. One of them, a chunky unattractive girl with



deep olive skin, gazed at him so intently and with so little apparent feeling that Jim, simply waiting for them all to leave, was on the point of speaking to her when she finally walked on by. The huge room cleared; Jim, knowing that Santiago would not be back to bother him for half an hour at least, walked carefully to his post at the window. His face was still flushed and he was furious at himself for having felt embarrassed, and even more, for having allowed that feeling to show.

He looked down. The snow had gone on melting and the church-yard was a thrown cloak of brown and white patches. Jim felt certain that nothing that Santiago or anyone else there could say could convince him to take the School's money and buy shoes with it. That was the trap they wanted him to fall into, the snare his own feeling of humiliation had set for him. He could not understand why, when the School was worth, he knew, more in human terms than a whole Battery of Mercantile Banks, the standards of that bank or the people in it should weigh so heavily with him. He thought of the way the School handled children who came in tatters so much worse than torn shoes that the School was happy if the kids had shoes at all, how the School shielded them from the shame that would have kept them home from a regular school, and of how similar the Bank was, in its expectations of its help, to all the schools Jim had ever been to or heard of before he started at the School.

Looking down at the churchyard, Jim reflected that the dead in their orderly graves had been alive once, and that their lives had not been orderly or aesthetic or neatly arranged in rows with all the feet at one end, the way the typists here were aligned in perfect file, the end of each row marked by a cubby where the supervisor sat, counting the counters. And that was it, Jim thought, suddenly more depressed than he had been in months, back in that blank time before the School had happened to him with all the force of a revelation; except for the moment it hadn't happened at all, and he was conscious only of his torn boots and of looking out a window at a graveyard, envying dead men's lives.

He hadn't noticed the girl approach him, and now, as she coughed awkwardly, announcing her presence, he looked up with actual fright, taking a startled step toward the window for escape, as though if it had been open he might have jumped.

"Excuse me." It was the chunky, dumpy, olive-skinned girl who had stared at him so intently before. "Excuse me, but . . ." Her voice, he noted, was one with her looks, lumpy in the vowels, undefined, slovenly in the consonants. "'Scuse me, but . . ." The words came out in a rush now, tumbling over each other in



their eagerness like puppies tilted out of the same basket. "I got these shoes for my brother, but he . . . well, it was the wrong size and they were on sale so I can't return them, so I thought, you know, maybe you could use them. Otherwise it would be like a waste." Awkwardly, almost letting the shoe box slide out of the green paper bag, she thrust the package at Jim. "The—uh—salesslip's inside. I dunno, maybe if it isn't the right size you could talk them into changing it. I'm not very good at doing that."

Jim had to force himself to look at her. He cringed away from the shoes as though they were infected, moving to his right in a half-circle around the girl, forcing her to turn to keep facing him, the package still outthrust, pointing like a weapon at his mid-section. He searched her eyes for clues. Was she being seductive? Was this a homely girl's gambit, no different in intention than the offer of a home-cooked meal? Was she substituting feet for stomach as the route to his heart? That was not the message he read. Nor the message, more likely under the circumstances and even less tolerable, one of Christian charity: her eyes were not over-brimming with solicitous concern, the condescension, dripping and redolent, the microscopic attentiveness with which the haves dispense their largesse to the less fortunate, an attitude Jim had caught and crucified in himself in his first months at the School.

The girl in front of him, shifting feet as she kept thrusting the package in maladroit jabs at his abdomen, seemed profoundly uncomfortable, seemed as if what she was doing was as distasteful to her as it was to Jim and all she wanted was to get it over with so she could stop being embarrassed. For the briefest of heartbeats, Jim thought that maybe the kindest thing would be to accept the shoes, but there were more transitions there than he could accomplish and he was talking almost before she stopped.

"No, thanks. I mean I don't need shoes. I've got money here, see? I mean I just got paid today like everybody else, I can buy shoes if I want to. You don't understand. You see, there are all these kids I take care of, so I don't need anybody to look out for me. Thank you, anyway." Jim knew his face was blood-colored and he felt so ashamed, without understanding why, that for the first time in his life he understood literally what was meant when somebody said, or more likely wrote, that he wished the earth would open up and swallow him. Jim would have accepted a drop through to the thirty-first floor as a divine dispensation.

"But I've got no use for them," the girl persisted, "maybe you know somebody—"

"Please," Jim said desperately. "Please. It was a mistake. Please."

"I'm sorry then," the girl said, smiling for the first time and suddenly looking almost pretty. "I'll see if I can get up enough nerve to make an exchange." She turned away abruptly and Jim turned the other way, starting back toward the unit. He stopped at a supply cabinet and cut off a length of twine, using it to bind the sole firmly to the boot, using the activity to keep himself from thinking.

Back at his desk, he struggled to convince himself that his shame was needless, conditioned merely, alive only because he had been taken unawares; but despite himself, the feeling persisted that the girl had done more for him, had sought to help him in some more genuine way, simply by giving him the shoes, than he or David or Maggie or even the Director, famous as he was, were doing for the children at the School, even though they gave all their time and sacrificed more besides.

Maybe that was because the School was a lie. The word came unbidden to his mind and settled there. Maybe the regular schools were more honest, preparing the children for the world they would really find, for the expectations that world would genuinely have of them. And the world belonged to Mrs. Santiago. The typist understood that, and was part of it, too. What the hell, Jim thought, at least she wasn't going barefoot.

Jim didn't wait for Santiago or the others to get back from lunch. He neatly stacked his undone work to one side of his desk and went for the elevators, limping slightly as the tied sole cut into his instep. He was terribly angry without knowing exactly what he was angry at: certainly not the girl, not even the Bank.

Downstairs, he went first to the Bank's street office, where he cashed his check, and then into the first shoe store he could find. He bought one pair of shoes, not boots, moderately priced, taking his own boots off before the salesman could approach, and wearing the new shoes out into the street.

He walked into the courtyard of Trinity Church before crossing the street to take a bus back uptown. The puddles on all sides of him had turned dirty: matchbook covers, cigarette foil and anonymous scraps were floating on the brackish surface. The remaining snow was dirty too, a black crust having formed around the outline of footprints, matching the dark puddles where the ball of the foot had touched earth.

It would not be easy, Jim knew, to explain to David and Maggie why he had quit the job, and even harder to say why he had bought the shoes. He knew the other teachers would feel hurt and betrayed. And worse, that he himself would feel, felt

now, that he had betrayed the children. He didn't know what he was going to say. He dropped his boots in a wire trashcan and walked up Broadway to City Hall Park, where he caught the Avenue B bus uptown. He sat at the very rear of the bus, watching people get off and on, and wondering idly, as his thoughts worked their way back to Trinity Churchyard, whether it had been the custom in those early days to put people into the earth with their best shoes on, or whether, in full tide of faith, they had simply sent their dead on to heaven in stockinged feet. He doubted if even the Director could answer that one.

## Turning Down

GERALD T. GORDON

Already they are turning down  
the lights in the houses of children  
They are turning down the phonograph  
They are turning down the heat  
They are turning down  
the children's mouths  
that open as they sleep  
They are turning down  
the arclights in their eyes  
They are turning down  
the noises in the sheets  
They are turning down the lovers  
loving in the night  
They are turning down  
the things they say  
that only silence can hear  
They are turning down  
their touchings in the places  
that have no eyes  
They are now turning down  
their wind-  
fall

# Live . . .

JOHN HUMMA

SOMEONE HAD altered the marquee in front of the mall. Gerald had not noticed when they had driven into the parking lot, but now as they got out of the car he saw that it read

ROGE MORON  
AS  
JAMES BORED  
IN  
LIVE AND LET DIE.

Laura, his wife, laughed, and he admired the acuteness of whoever had made the adjustment. He generally admired clever things, and at odd, involuntary moments over the next few days he found himself thinking about the sign and laughing out loud.

Inside the mall, Laura saw a child's dress in a show window that she wanted for Marty, their not-yet-two-year-old daughter. Gerald realized, as the salesgirl waited on Laura, that he had nearly forgotten the children. They were visiting their grandparents for two weeks and had been gone now four days. He had hardly thought of them at all in that time. It was as if he took their absence for granted, as if they had never been, though he still felt, or sensed, a peculiarity at his and Laura's new freedom to come and go as they pleased without the concern of the children. He wondered if he were "cold-hearted," if it were natural not to miss them as often as Laura said that she missed them. For it was only, or so it seemed to Gerald, when Laura mentioned the children that he remembered them. Reflecting, he believed that he put in the requisite amount of time with Jimmy and Marty, about as much at any rate as other fathers did with their children. And, in his way, he knew that he enjoyed them as much. Still, it was as though they had never existed, their being away now.



The call came Saturday afternoon. Laura was busy in the back room making bright new yellow bedspreads for the kids' beds. Gerald had been reading a book and was sullen at having been disturbed. It was Sally, Laura's mother. She was calm at first, but then began to sob so convulsively that he could make nothing of the strangled words she was trying to speak. Frank, Laura's father, had then taken the phone and told him that Jimmy was dead. He had struck his head on the concrete at the swimming pool and had died before they could get him to the hospital. He had apparently slipped on the wetness beside the pool. One chance in a million. He had died not a half-hour ago, Frank said.

Gerald looked at his watch. That would have made it around three o'clock. Jimmy had been five years old. Outside, the brightness splashed where the trees did not intercept the sun. He saw the boy lying, as if asleep, on the concrete by the pool. *Fear no more the heat of the sun.* And again, as if he were sleeping, his features relaxed and purged of all expression except the blankness of children sleeping, on the cot in the ambulance. The moisture rose to Gerald's eyes. When Jimmy was asleep, he often looked as Gerald's mother did in a photograph taken when she was a young girl. Gerald thought that he had loved Jimmy the most when Jimmy was sleeping, a vulnerable—and beautiful—extension of himself.

Laura went hysterical when he told her minutes later. It took Gerald an hour to decently calm her. Then they packed a suitcase and left the house with the sunny yellow material still spread out on the table beside the sewing machine in the back room. They drove west, toward the small town where Laura had grown up, straight into the sun. Gerald had often complained that he had almost rather do anything—drive all night—as to have to drive into the face of the sun.

**JIMMY'S BODY** had been brought home for the funeral. Grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins—all came from out of town. It was a terribly sad funeral, as the funerals of young people always are. When the minister of Laura's church delivered the eulogy, even he—veteran of so many occasions of death—almost gave way to his emotions. He said that a better part of Gerald and Laura had been spirited away; a higher part, the innocence which is reborn in parents with the birth of their children. Gerald tried not to listen to the minister's words. He tried to listen to the sounds from the street coming in through the half-raised windows, to that meaninglessness. But he heard the words

of the minister and saw Jimmy again, sleeping in his arms, as once when he had carried him to bed after Jimmy had fallen asleep in front of the TV set. They had let him stay up to see a program about the Galapagos Islands, about which he had somehow learned in that separate existence of his even now, at five, already forming, forming. But asleep, he was Gerald again, vulnerable.

But the waxen effigy in the coffin was not Jimmy. Or anybody. Jimmy was gone, as though he had never been. And now he was to be forgotten, as the new life formed over the old that was. Until he was as forgotten as Gerald's grandmother, a remarkable woman, whom Gerald had loved, but whom even her own children, including Gerald's father, had now forgotten. Until, when she was remembered, it was as one remembers an old house he once lived in, a play he had once seen. As a fact out of the past. Which was all right. Gerald knew that. It was natural.

In the weeks which followed, Laura mourned. It was on her, of course, that the responsibility of disposing of Jimmy's things fell. His clothes, his playthings. She remembered buying this or that outfit, trying it on him. The Christmases when he was excited by this or that toy, and the look in his eyes that had made Christmas Christmas, birthdays birthdays. A few remarkable drawings, which he had executed last year in kindergarten. These she stored away. But most of the clothes, and the toys which Marty wouldn't use, she gave to Goodwill. The nicest, the most expensive, she put away: maybe they would adopt a boy someday. But she scarcely thought about that, could think about it. The days were the most difficult for her. The nights, particularly after Marty's bedtime, were the easiest—that time when the children had not ordinarily been around.

Marty, for several days after the funeral, went about the house, from room to room, looking for Jimmy. "Where Jimmy?" she asked, looking up at Laura or Gerald, and pointing her finger out. "Where Jimmy?" And she would look again from room to room. But gradually she left off looking for him, and after three weeks she had lost the word *Jimmy*. Entirely.

For Gerald, the weeks after the funeral had a business side to them. There was the insurance. After the birth of each of the children, he had taken out a fifteen thousand dollar policy. His group insurance, also, paid five thousand. And then one day, out of the blue, a check for twenty-five thousand came from the swimming pool, or rather from the insurance company representing the recreation center in the town where Laura's parents lived. How stupid he was, Gerald thought! He had not even thought to sue. But suddenly, with the funeral expenses paid, Gerald had

more money—disposable—than he thought he would ever have at one time. And so now he met with a tax consultant and with a representative of a brokerage firm. Though he dared not think the thought out loud as it were, he was aware of the fact that Jimmy, as his dying had clearly shown, had been an invest-

...t.

And so Gerald and Laura recovered from Jimmy's death. For Laura, the ordeal had not been easy. She realized, however, that her grieving was exhausting for Gerald who had borne up so well, so courageously about it. That was, she saw, the difference between a man and a woman. A man was capable of greater stoicism. But, bravely, she cultivated a stoicism of her own, and only occasionally now, when Gerald was gone from the house, would she cry.

Soon, she was what Gerald and their friends called "her old self" again. She could even, without becoming sad, tell Marty that the little boy in the picture with Marty was her brother who was in heaven now. She re-taught Marty Jimmy's name. But the Jimmy whom the picture was merely a reflection of was, she could tell, lost for Marty. He was not even a memory for her—only a little boy in a photograph. Laura vowed, not morbidly, to herself that she would keep Jimmy's memory alive. It was too pitiable to think of his being lost absolutely, it was an injustice to him. But even she found as the months passed and as their lives swam in new currents, as Marty every few weeks changed into another self, that all the selves that had been Jimmy's five years had blurred into an increasingly indistinct recollection. More and more Laura required an effort of will to bring him back.

A year passed. Marty grew. Her roundish baby's features lengthened subtly, became those of a little girl. At times Gerald could see Jimmy in the features and, at these times, himself. Sometimes at night he went into her room to watch her sleeping in the soft lambency of the nightlight. His own features, himself, a child, breathing, growing toward a future so exclusively absolute, One as to be an utter abnegation of the fold-upon-fold of the Past. His daughter was Gerald himself, evolving unawares, through the spirals of sleep, beyond himself. At such moments as these he felt very tender toward that small shaky unit: *family*. And he felt very aware of the lack of meaning, ultimately, in anything. To be so easily destroyed!

It was, in all, this year after Jimmy's death, a good year for Gerald. He was doing well in his work (he was considered very clever) and was happy, he thought he was happy. One late



afternoon in August, the hottest time of the day *and* the year, he was driving home with three take-home orders of fried chicken on the seat beside him. Laura had complained of being tired, and he had volunteered to go out and get something. It would be fun to eat in front of the TV and watch the news. He noticed now the marquee of the drive-in theater on his left. He caught ROGER MOORE IN LIVE AND LET DIE. Something clicked in his head. There was something funny someone had done once. What was it? His quick intelligence assembled the pieces. Someone had changed a marquee—it was at the mall, he remembered, last summer, a year ago—had changed it to read, ROGE MORON PLAYING JAMES BORED IN LIVE AND LET DIE. Pretty near that. Cute. It was about the time of Jimmy's accident. He and Marty had been visiting their grandparents. He recalled now, suddenly, that he hadn't missed them.

And now he remembered Marty in the front seat beside him. The three stacked boxes of chicken, aromatic, separated them. She was standing in the seat watching the franchise restaurants and service stations and branch banks passing in their plastic and neon or traditional dress. Rather splendid probably, to her, in the sun. And who was *she*, this separate little person. Why, he had forgotten she was in the front seat with him. And he could hardly see all at once to drive. He himself was Roge Moron, *he* was James Bored. He looked blindly for a way off the road. He turned and stopped the car under a pair of huge, blurred, yellow parabolas. He, a grown man, was bawling into the hard rim of the steering wheel. He heard his daughter saying, "Daddy, Daddy," naming him, and he looked up, straight into the cruel sun pouring through the arches. *Fear no more . . .* Through the moisture, cerule and rose and orchid, he now searched the face of his daughter. It was not his face. Or any he had seen before. It was the face of a small stranger, frightened.



# Marginalia . . .

(continued)

costs too much and offers little chance of providing a satisfactory return on the money invested. Public colleges, moreover, may be a waste of tax dollars because they cost more than their benefit to society in increased earning power.

I am not enough of an economist or a statistician to dispute this opinion. As a teacher, I must agree that education is a risky investment, especially if one expects it to result in a monetary payoff.

But surely college education in the liberal arts tradition has goals that distinguish it from the trade school, goals that are the sum of the whole rather than the subject matter of any one course. I like the direct simplicity of Robert Hutchins' definition: "College is a place to learn how to think." That ability may be useful in earning a living, but then again, it may not. A thinking person may have to reject some of the things involved in "earning a living" in our society; he may even decide, like Thoreau, that "The greater part of what my neighbors call good I believe in my soul to be bad, and if I repent of anything, it is very likely to be my good behavior." What a failure Henry must have seemed to his father, that industrious pencil manufacturer! I can hear him now: "Four years at Harvard, and for what? I ask him what he plans to do with his his life now that he has quit the pencil business and he tells me he is "self-appointed inspector of snow-storms and rain-storms."

The example of Thoreau indicates how difficult it is to evaluate the effect of education. If education is interpreted narrowly as training for a specific job, Thoreau was a monumental failure. True, he "determined to go into business at once," but his business was to explore the depths of his soul and then write what he had learned, in the hope of helping others "to front only the essential facts of life." To his contemporaries, he was a disappointment. To posterity, he was the author of the endlessly stimulating *Walden* and an "Essay on Civil Disobedience" that has helped change the world.

The true outcomes of education are no more easily measured than is an individual life, proving how perceptive Cummings was when he wrote: "Nothing measureable matters a good goddam." Because these outcomes cannot be quantified into average income levels or number of Ph.D.'s or some other such statistic, some question their reality. I don't. I've taught freshmen and I've taught seniors, and I am convinced that something happens to

*those students who are receptive and able, and that what happens is generally good. By "good," I mean that these students have discovered some insight into what it means to be human—the glories and the limitations—and that they are better equipped to live their lives as human beings, not as money-making machines or sex objects or economic producers.*

*It would be foolish to argue that college is the only place one can learn these intangible but important things that constitute the residue of an education after facts are forgotten and marks are only memories. It would be equally foolish to argue that all college graduates are educated. But it seems to me that college may be the most economical place to seek wisdom. Of course I am calculating costs in the manner of my friend, Thoreau: "The cost of a thing is the amount of what I will call life, which is required to be exchanged for it, immediately or in the long run." My parents used to speak of getting their education in "the college of hard knocks." It was a good education for those capable of learning from it, but the cost in life was high; for some, it was "too soon old, too late smart."*

*With all of the imperfections and risks of college, I'd rather see my children try that route first.*

*J.J.K.*



# CONTRIBUTORS

**M**ARY A. CULLITON is a former reporter and editor on the *Denver Register*. She now lives in Washington, D.C., with her husband, newspaperman James Fiedler, and their four children. M. E. GRENANDER, Professor of English at SUNY in Albany, last appeared in our Spring 1974 issue. CHARLES EDWARD EATON has contributed many poems and stories to these pages. He was recently honored with the di Castagnola Award for Poetry. DALE GOODHUE grew up in Atlanta and Savannah, is presently living in the nation's capital. P. W. GRAY is "Poet in the Schools" in Omaha, Nebraska. LARRY BOWMAN, a senior English major at La Salle College, makes his first professional appearance with "The Joys of Noise." TERRY STOKES' latest book, *Crimes of Passion* (Knopf), is now going into a second edition. He has published widely in magazines, including *The New Yorker*, *Esquire*, and *The New American Review*. "First Garden" marks SUSAN BARTELS' second appearance here. Her first collection, *Step Carefully in Night Grass*, has been well received. PHYLLIS BROOKS is a transplanted Brooklynite now living in California. Her poems have been seen in *Poetry*, *The Nation*, and numerous little magazines. CARL SCHIFFMAN published his first story here in 1972 and has since found doors opened in many other magazines, including the *Transatlantic Review* and *Quartet*. He is currently working on his first novel. GERALD T. GORDON teaches in Maine, has written articles on contemporary poets, and published his own poetry in a variety of little magazines. JOHN HUMMA is Associate Professor of English at Georgia Southern. His poems have appeared in *Commonweal* and the *New Republic*, his stories in *Southern Humanities Review* and *The Texas Quarterly*.

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